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ABSTRACT

Goodwill Industries of America (GIA), like many organizations that are national or global in scope, uses distance education to deliver management training. GIA uses distance education to train staff identified as future GIA directors, pending the successful conclusion of training. One of the most serious drawbacks to this and all distance education is its low completion rate. Fewer than half of those who begin the GIA training complete it in the recommended 18 months. Several strategies may help raise the completion rate: (1) to avoid encouraging participants to believe they already have all the management skills and information they need so that completing training seems like a pro forma task, regularly schedule meetings with the students, either by telephone or teleconference or in regional face-to-face meetings; (2) assign the students core courses and then offer them an option to choose among several modules, seminars, and courses; (3) move students through the training together, as cohorts; (4) require tutors to be in contact (telephone or face-to-face) with every learner at least twice per month; and (5) schedule regular cohort meetings, at which students would have the opportunity to compare their standing within the context of their peers. (The document contains a literature review of theoretical models of distance education, a synthesized model, and 29 references.) (CML)

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Distance Education and Adult Learning

In an Industrial Environment

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Introduction

Many large organizations, in both the for-profit and the not-for profit sectors, strive to improve the quality of their workforce through staff development, training and education. For organizations which are national or global in scope, the cost of training is substantial. Many organizations have turned to distance education interventions for the delivery of staff development to control costs.

Goodwill Industries of America, Inc., is a large multi-national not-for-profit organization which delivers management training via distance education. As Goodwill Industries competes to expand the range and depth of social services it offers, delivery of staff development through distance education will increase in importance.

The objectives of this paper are three-fold:

- Examine distance education in the context of adult education. This entails describing what is being done in the field and what is quantitatively known about the subject.
- Examine some notions of adult professional development, particularly in the area of executive development, and look at some quantitative research in this field. Included in this will be a search for common ground between the area of executive development in industrial settings and distance education.

- Describe the distance education policies for executive professional development at Goodwill Industries of America, Inc. (GIA), and consider whether the literature suggests possibilities for changes or enhancements to the policies and procedures at this organization and other organizations like it.

Background of Goodwill Industries

Historically, the Goodwill movement originated in 1902 when Methodist minister Edgar Helms established a business of refurbishing second-hand goods and reselling them, thus providing vocational rehabilitation to the handicapped (a population later to be subsumed in a much broader target population identified as people with vocational disabilities and other barriers to employment.)

Since then, the Goodwill movement has grown to 179 independent agencies in North America and the south Pacific, serving more than 130,000 clients per year by 1990. Annual combined gross revenue for the movement in 1990 was approximately $664 million. In addition, there are also 46 Goodwill affiliates in 33 countries outside of North America.

As each agency is independent with it own president and board of directors, the role of the corporate offices at Goodwill Industries of America, Inc., (GIA) is that of a national association of independent agencies. A major goal of GIA is to provide guidance, support and assistance to the

agencies. Professional development of executive staff for the agencies is a major goal.

The Executive Intern Development Program at GIA demonstrates how distance education is exemplified in this context. The cadre of executive interns is the pool of candidates from which the Goodwill movement draws to select new executive directors for agencies when replacements are needed.

Typically, candidates are proffered by executives who feel they have an aspirant with the "right stuff." The following sequence of events will then likely occur:

- A member of the Human Resources staff at GIA will go to the agency to visit with the executive and interview the candidate who has been advanced. During the interview, the candidate is asked a series of questions related to management style, previous work experience, willingness to relocate, and potential for leadership. If the candidate "passes" this initial interview, he/she is advanced to the next stage.

- The candidate is brought together with five other nominees for a management performance assessment in a model office assessment center. In this context, the assessees are tested on their abilities to deal with problems as they present themselves in typical office settings such as group meetings and in-basket decisions. Also as part of the assessment center, a written test is administered at the conclusion of the model office. This test is designed to measure whether the candidate knows the facts and concepts of managing a Goodwill Industries agency.

- If the nominee survives the assessment center, he/she is accepted into executive internship. The professional development at this point consists of two parts: written correspondence training in the conventional sense and recommended seminar training which the assessee may or may not choose to attend.

- It is suggested to the interns that they plan on completing executive intern training in no more than 18 months. Upon completion they are awarded a certificate of completion and are then "certified" by GIA to be a director of an agency.

There have been problems with this system. For the organization, one of the most grave consequences is the low completion rate. Less than half of those who are accepted into executive intern training completed it in the recommended time; of those who don't complete it in the recommended time, most will never complete the work.

As each agency is independent of the corporate office, the corporate office has limited influence in compelling reluctant interns to complete their training. Further, agency executives may find no reason to compel their interns to complete their training (for example, the executive may decide that he/she doesn't want to lose the intern to another agency.)

Motivation to complete distance learning program has been a concern of distance education research. While most distance education research has focused in the arena of open learning, such as the British Open University,

much of the research is applicable to adult learning in an organizational context.

Distance Education: Theoretical Model

Holmberg (1985) provides a theoretical base for the feasibility of distance education. He defines distance education by contrasting models for teaching (which he defines as prescriptive,) and learning (which he defines as descriptive.) Holmberg argues that if distance teaching can influence the pace and direction of learning, a general theory ought to be derived.

Holmberg rejects the notion that teaching can be defined in terms of imparting knowledge, which suggests that the learner is a passive vessel. Quite the contrary, he suggests that the teacher is more of a facilitator. A teacher would play this role, whether in face-to-face learning or distance learning. An important question is whether the facilitator role of a teacher is only appropriate in adult learning or if it is transferrable to pedagogy.

He defines distance education as any educational experience where the student is not under direct supervision of the teacher. Essentially four elements comprise his theory of distance teaching:

- Specific experiences are effectively implanted in the student creating a predisposition to learning (this a great way to side-step the question of motivation!)

- An optimal structure is defined which is conducive to simplifying the information in a body of knowledge, which increases the manipulability of the information in relation to the gifts of the learner.
- The most effective sequence of events for learning the material is specified.
- The rewards and punishments of the learning process are specified.

What is fascinating is that the Holmberg assumes that there are general instructional events which are influenced by such things as the readability of the material, submission of assignments, media used, turn around time and so forth. He asserts that the core of teaching can be described as an interaction between the teacher and student (a notion to be echoed in the next subsection;) emotional involvement contributes to learning pleasure; learning pleasure supports student motivation; student motivation facilitates learning; and that the effectiveness of teaching is reflected in what students learn (i.e., if you wanted a measurement of teaching effectiveness, measure the students' learning.)

The Design of Distance Education: Transaction Approach

Rumble (1986) suggests that directed learning is merely one point on a continuum. He says that "distance" ought to be contemplated in only the transactional sense, (as does Holmberg,) not the physical one. He writes:

> Using these dimensions, the most distant programme would be one in which there was neither dialogue nor structure - an

> example would be a wholly self-directed programme of reading....This conceptualisation also helps explain how a student learning in a "face-to-face" environment, whose sole educational activity is to go to lectures to take notes, can be at a greater transactional distance than a student on a distance education course who regularly meets, corresponds with, or telephones his tutor.

Transactional considerations aside, Rumble references D. Keegan, who in 1986 proposed seven principal characteristics of distance education:

- The separation of teacher and student
- The influence of an educational organization
- The use of technical media
- The provision of two-way communication
- The absence of group learning (while retaining the possibility of occasional seminars)
- The privatization of learning (occurring away from a group)

The inference made from this is that there is an implied learning contract occurring between the student and the tutor. Such a contract also implies particular skills and self-knowledge on the part of the learner. Such self-knowledge can easily be perceived as a skill possessed by adults yet not easily perceived as being possessed by children.

Self-knowledge is principally an adult trait. Thus, one can observe principles of andragogy, as described by Malcolm Knowles, distinguishing

distance education as catering almost exclusively to adults. In fact, this is the vast portion of those actively engaged in distance learning. This notion is mentioned as an aside, rather than as a point. It is stressed only to emphasize that in this context, distance education is inexorably linked with adult learning.

Rumble pursues his notion of learning transactions, and in so doing, defines distance education as not being substantially difference that "traditional" education. Transactions occur between the student and the learning materials -- reading, viewing, listening, manipulating, etc. And transactions occur between the student and the teacher, as previously cited. But transactions also occur between the student and the institution in terms of student services, and administrative routines. Absent from Rumble's list in this category, however, is the transaction of student identification with the institution, the degree of which might impact upon the student's motivation for completion of learning activities.

Design With Political Considerations

In the United Kingdom, where the society is concerned with class status, it is not surprising to find Harris (1987) referencing the "Oxford Mobility Studies" in the context of distance education and adult

development. This survey of the general population sought to examine social mobility and the role of education in that mobility. The study suggested that the working class (which is a more socially radical group than in the U.S.,) did not perceive credentialing through a university as the only way to advance from the working class to the "service" class (i.e., middle class.) Harris suggests that working class individuals who enter the British Open University (which does not have rigorous entry requirements, thus providing greater access to the working class,) have to go through a "double closure," of sorts, "pursuing both 'trade union' type strategies of labor withdrawal...and 'professional' 'exclusionary' strategies including credentialism."

The suggestion for the British Open University may be, however, that degree completion, or "credentialing," may be in conflict with other social pressures, which in the case of the U.K. can be more evident than in the U.S. The bottom line, nonetheless, is that completion at the British Open University is not a universally held goal. While this point is not necessarily transferrable to the distance education offered at Goodwill Industries of America or other organizationally sponsored staff development programs, it serves to suggest completion or closure goals of the organization can be in conflict with closure goals of the individual.

In the design of curriculum, Harris observes that the British Open University chose to develop a knowledge-structure approach to education, in contrast, he writes, to the behavioral objective approach. The notion is that the language used by teachers and others involved in academia is obfuscating and replete with "irrelevant scholastic displays." The approach chosen was to demystify the academic language. This would proceed by "indoctrinating" both teacher and learner in a common metalanguage paired down to universal logical terms.

Harris reports that the outcome was a failure, and the new "metalanguage" became a vehicle for one-way discourse. Language could not easily be manipulated to achieve a political goal.

In the composition of course work, curriculum designers are urged to use plain language to address the "political" realism of the student population. The expectation being, once again, that language is somehow an obstruction or barrier to learning. Harris notes that "very little research has been done on the actual ways OU students do decode the messages they receive from the teaching system...."

Course Structure

Harris and Williams (1977) outline several elements of the structure of a distance education course. This is noted here because it is typical of the view of course construction for distance education throughout the literature. For example, this structure (roughly speaking) is echoed by Jenkins (1985). Harris and Williams' structure would contain the following:

- A detailed synopsis of the course sectionalized into study units
- The ideal visual layout for the course (suggestive of a medium which is primarily print in nature)
- An introduction for each new subject -- so that the student is left in no doubt about what he is studying (suggesting, perhaps, that the student is not directly involved in articulating the curriculum!)
- Many examples of a particular theory or concept
- Practical exercises in the text which will help break up drawn out factual pieces of the text
- The use of visual aids wherever practical and whenever necessary. These aids will help reinforce the concept being studied and can take the form of illustrations, charts or graphs
- Self-test questions periodically during the course and finally a written assignment at the end of each section
- The course writer should be given an independence of writing so that he can express himself in a personalized style, but a style that is both confident and authoritative.

What is remarkable about this, if nothing else, is that these are casual guidelines for developing any instruction; there is nothing unique or particular to distance education which this format addresses.

Jenkins (1985), in her manual for the development of distance education materials, she doesn't address distance education as having any other special needs or requirements apart from conventional face-to-face instruction. She makes several assumptions: first, distance education is based primarily on the written word, and the curriculum developer's task is to contrive material that is sequentially auto-instructional (e.g., programmed instruction.)

In Jenkin's chapter, "Deciding on a Format," her major concerns are:

- Whether it should be one book or multiple books
- What page size to use
- How to arrange the features on the page

Technology

As distance education becomes more organized as a discipline, the technology used to deliver the material will impact upon the design of the curriculum -- a case, clearly, of content following form. Kaye and Rumble (1981) examined the practices of several distance education environments, all of them involved in higher education. Included among them were Allama Iqbal Open University, Pakistan; Athabasca University, Canada; Everyman's University, Israel; Fernuniversitat, West Germany; Free University of Iran; the

Sri Lanka Institute of Distance Education; Universidad Estatal a Distancia, Costa Rica; Universidad Nacional Abierta, Venezuela; and Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia, Spain.

Kaye and Rumble identified nine major points where learning would differ in distance university education as compared to conventional learning environments:

DIMENSIONS	CONVENTIONAL LEARNING	DISTANCE LEARNING
1) Students	Relatively homogeneous in age and background; live at same location; dependent learners	Relatively heterogeneous; scattered; independent learners; relatively uncontrolled
2) Student Records	Do not need highly developed nor detailed records	Accurate records are essential, including assessment, grades and correspondence.
3) Student Assessment and Accreditation	Relatively cheat-proof	Assessment-at-a-distance increases problems of validity; use of large numbers of correspondence tutors decreases reliability.
4) Student Support	Automatically built-in face-to-face systems	Need for special provision of local back-up services to help students with learning problems and to minimize drop-out.
5) Media/Methods	Essentially face-to-face teaching; labor intensive; teaching skills need to be well-defined	Essentially mediated teaching; capital intensive; skills needed generally not available.

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6) Courses	Relatively simple; creation and production courses are relatively inexpensive;	More complex course creation; requires specialized staff as result of division of labor; high start-up costs.
7) Organization Administration	Little administrative support required; vast majority of staff in colleges are the teachers; main administrative problem is time-tabling	Strong administrative framework needed to link together student support and records function; course creation function, etc.
8) Control and Regulation	Conventional problems of planning, scheduling, etc.	These problems are magnified.
9) Cost structure	Basically labor-intensive, and directly and primarily related to number of students.	Basically capital intensive, and related to course creation and production costs.

Kaye and Ruble also identify a variety of multi-media educational delivery systems, associating a variety of educational application to which they may be used. None of the presentations are presented as quantitatively more effective than any other, except that it seems to be generally accepted that a variety of media enhances distance learning.

In the literature, there is little quantitative measurement of media effectiveness. However, in one study, (Wisconsin State Board of Vocational, 1985) 3,000 adult students were polled after a staff development seminar via video conference. While no reference was made as to the success of the conference, the survey, which asked about the efficacy of the medium, suggested that this was an effective vehicle for instructional delivery.

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In discussing implementing new technology in the area of distance education, Rebel (1987) makes several assumptions about the implication of these in adult education.

- New media (e.g., television, radio, computers, etc.) are a part of our lives. Most adults today have grown up with these things. The implication here is that most adults are comfortable and accustomed to receiving information through other than print media.

- Teachers will need to use the new media whether they like it or not -- otherwise they will be left in an even more marginal position as they attempt to maintain the attention of their audience.

- For most educators, there is still a lack of a global "macro" concept of how new media should be used in distance education; that is, should it be used for the mere sake and dazzle of using it; or, should it be used when the empirical evidence suggests that a particular medium will be most effective in delivering the information?

- Most people have a wealth of intuitive knowledge about use of new media in learning merely from living in the electronic information age.

Simmon (1987) supplements Rebel's notions of using electronic media. Simmon believes that use of the new electronic media, such as video tape, audio cassette tapes, slow scan television, cable and broadcast television, computer-based instruction and interactive video all have the potential of catering much more effectively to the adult distance learner. Arguably, one can reach a larger audience for instructional purposes for less money.

Simmon seems to like Bloom's taxonomy and writes of using it in conjunction with setting learning objectives for use with the electronic media. Simmon also echo Knowles's pedagogy/andragogy dichotomy by stressing that adult learners need more autonomy and independence. However, Simmon cautions that, "despite the wondrous technological connections, people must still get together face to face, from time to time."

Batey and Cowell (1985) say that the term "distance education" really is a catch-all phrase to label any situation where the learner is formally enrolled at an institution, but instruction doesn't necessarily occur on site. Though their focus is on education for rural and small school populations (primarily pedagogical,) they cite three elements for defining distance education:

- Communication between the teacher and the student is not face-to-face
- An organization plans, coordinates and supervises the program
- A technology-based delivery system is often used

Among the technology they identify, by way of listing, rather than ranking or quantifying, are: textbooks, workbooks, test packets, audio tapes, records, radio, telephone, satellite, television in all its manifestations: broadcast, cable, microwave, fiber optics, slow scan, and live classes.

Batey and Cowell also acknowledge the growing contribution of the personal computer toward enhancing distance education.

Murphy (1981) had been involved in a distance education program for five years in Lesotho. In the mid-1970s, the Lesotho Distance Learning Centre had begun from scratch, and one of their great limitations was the level of technology available to the learner population. Consequently, almost all of their materials had been written documentation. Radio, however, was also widely available to the learners, and they began to take advantage of that medium.

Murphy's observation of the technological limitation of the learner ought not be brushed aside as merely a third world dilemma. While video tape and audio cassette tape are widely used throughout the general population in the United States, many people are still not comfortable in using personal computers, let alone video disks, interactive video, satellite dishes, etc. In selecting technology for the development of distance education materials, one must be prepared to carefully analyze the technological abilities of the learning population. With adults, there seems to be an age barrier for using technology as any thing else.

Motivation in Distance Education

Motivation is a special problem in distance education. Much of the reinforcement which might exist for learners in a conventional environment simply may not exist in distance learning. Elgood (1987) observes quite wisely that it is folly to assume the love of learning would motivate students to stick with it if they got frustrated. Elgood writes,

> For instance, it is quite obvious that the distance learner, temporarily bored or annoyed with what the text has to say, may give it up and go out to play golf or whatever. This is not what one would expect where students are together in some formal environment and there is a tutor present.

Elgood identifies several areas where motivation can be enhanced in distance education. Elgood believes that real learning occurs when problems occur and the student attempts to formulate a question to ask the tutor to clarify. Therefore, Elgood argues, the tutor should not over-explain in the directions to an assignment. The curriculum developer should avoid the compulsion to offer complete and perfect instructions, in other words.

Elgood observes that moods of the learner changes.

> When students are tired and depressed, are doing badly, and see completion of the programme as impossible, then expectancy theory tells us that despite a general desire to succeed motivation will be low.

Elgood says that in considering a distance learning course simply as a task requiring motivation, he refers to Maslow's self-actualization model. He

suggests that motivation can be achieved by: offering the student an awareness of having made progress; try to provide a continuing and escalating experience of success; give recognition of the merits of the work, even with imperfect outcomes; recognize the personal identity of the student; allow the students some freedom in the order in which they tackle work; and give them advanced organizers (i.e., provide first a framework for the knowledge so the student understands the relationship of the small bit of knowledge to the great whole.)

Elgood also helps define motivation in distance education by identifying elements which distance education does not offer. He does this by way of contrasting what conventional education offers the adult learner which can be motivating:

- Peace and security. For about one hour, nothing unforeseen can happen to students (i.e., no telephones, no visitors.)
- Maintaining group membership. Students are visibly present in a peer group.
- Relief. Attending a formal lecture is an acceptable excuse for not doing something else.
- Social gain. The student can arrange to sit with particular people whose friendship is sought.
- Prominence. By asking questions, students can draw favorable attention to themselves.

Coldeway (1980a) quantified motivation for distance learners and completion rates at Athabasca University, in Edmonton, Alberta. This was part of a series of several studies under the Research of Evaluation of Distance Education for the Adult Learner (REDEAL). Most distance education, because of a lack of empirical data, uses "sophisticated guesswork models" (as is evidenced by most of the references in this paper.) The REDEAL project was an attempt to remedy that problem by building an empirical base for distance education.

Using a random selection of 38 students, he had the subject submit week forms identifying the level of activity for the week in relation to the course. Coldeway found that course completers studied more than non-completers. However, during the course, study activity dropped for both groups. As examination time approached, study time increased as did contact with the tutors.

Original hypotheses for the experiment were that: learner motivation decreases as course progresses; learner motivation correlates with tutor telephone contact; and, the more hours of study, the more likely the student is to complete the course.

Among his conclusions for this study was that a relationship exists between learner motivation and tutor contact.

In another REDEAL study (Coldeway, 1980b) the focus of the experiment was whether peer tutoring could impact on completion rates in distance education. Their findings were inconclusive. First, only two peer tutors were used in the experiment, and one dropped out. Second, there was a tremendous negative reaction on the part of the faculty to the use of peer tutors. The fear was that this would negatively impact the accreditation of Athabasca University.

In another REDEAL study, Crawford (1981) compared completion rates for the same course under three different institutions, to observe if there was a difference in course completion due to pacing. In this study, Crawford had three distance colleges in the region, Athabasca University, the Open Learning Institute, and North Island College, offer the same distance course at the same time. Data was collected from 313 student by questionnaire. In one school, students were paced (i.e., they were told how much to complete by certain milestone dates.) Successful completion of the course was clearly linked to not only pacing but to tutorial contact as well.

Some Executive Development Literature

Practically all of the distance education literature revolves around adults learning as part of a higher education curriculum. Some articles and books dealt with distance education in terms of professional development for teachers, but in general, books and articles on the specific subject of distance learning in business and industry are virtually non-existent in the educational literature.

The professional development research for managers has shown researchers' concern for the articulation of performance competencies. Mentkowski (1982), for example, focussed on 103 women managers from 53 Milwaukee corporations to develop a competency model. She developed a list of 500 behavior examples of management performance, had the women managers rank those which are critical to job performance. Mentkowski writes,

> Competencies can be defined as developmental. Competencies can be taught. Competencies are holistic, that is, characteristics of persons, can be an interrelated set of skills, knowledge, disposition, motivation and attitudes. Competencies are generic abilities that transfer across situations and contexts. Further, competencies are valid when they are demonstrated to be causally related to effective performance.

She notes, however, that mere acquisition of competence does not imply the demonstration of such on the job.

She ranked the final list of competencies based on the number of times the item was coded in relation to the number of times the managers identified them. Top on the list, in order were: proactivity; diagnostic use of concepts; development of others; accurate self-assessment; efficiency orientation; expressed concern with impact; conceptualization; self-presentational; perceptual objectivity; oral communication skills; use of unilateral power; self-control; management of groups; positive regard; use of socialized power; logical thought; stamina and adaptability; spontaneity; specialized knowledge; and concern with affiliation.

Mentkowski concludes that much of management education to date has focused on specialized knowledge, i.e., context knowledge expertise. She proposes that perhaps it is better to focus on the development of the whole person. She also notes from her research that personal maturity and intellectual abilities seem to precede the development of interpersonal and entrepreneurial skills.

Mentkowski's notion of a holistic approach to executive development is echoed by DeAnda (1982). DeAnda's contribution, while not research-based by any means, offers a training method for executives which incorporates a holistic approach "on the integration of the American and Japanese way" of management development. This program was designed

for the training of women and minorities as they attempt to advance through the ranks of corporate America. The author writes,

> By holistic, we mean that an effective learning program includes information, interchanges with others, support from the personal environment, and application to real situations.

DeAnda's program focused on training the woman/minority executive in such areas as: the power structure; mentoring; networking with other interns; and developing specific skills in project management and technical writing.

Mohamed (1983) developed a self-directed professional development program for local administrators of vocational education programs in Florida. The study involved 36 participants who use self-directed materials and local educational organizations, rather than the college campus. Among the resources used were vocational education organizations and the state department of education. In other words, the learner, in this case, still had regular access to resource people, even though that was not in a traditional classroom environment. Learners still gathered regularly as a group to meet.

Mohamed also incorporated elements of in-service training (and Knowles' andragogical model,) such as basing the curriculum on the

identified needs of the learners; having the participants involved in goals and objectives setting; and seeking input in the design of the program.

Pettitt (1987) was interested in developing a systems approach for the curriculum development of executive training programs. Under the auspices of the 4-H Executive Development Institute, Pettitt used a Delphi panel and series of questionnaires to a random sample of 91 state extension directors, state 4-H leaders, state training leaders, and administrators of land-grant extension programs. Through this process, he was able to identify, much as Mentkowski, areas of focus for executive development. Of great interest to me was that this focus was on the non-profit sector. Pettitt identified five major categories in rank order:

- Managing human resources -- communications, human relations, team building, staff development, performance appraisals and standards
- Strategic planning -- understanding mission, involving relevant groups, assessing strengths and weaknesses, maximizing benefits
- Politics, policy and extension -- the educator's role, creating change, ethics and networking
- Developing financial resources -- securing resources, involving volunteers in development, making and cultivating contacts, and evaluating the development program
- Futures -- having a personal and 4-H futures perspective, future of family and human development, future of volunteerism, and techniques for planning

Kaplan (1985) suggests that executives may be easier to train before they become executives. He notes that top executives in power have several elements which limit their potential for self-examination (a competency identified by Mentkowski) and therefore limits their capacity for self-development. Executives are powerful, successful and expert, write Kaplan,

> Because doing the job involves making important decisions and affects the lives and fortunes of others, many executives are keenly aware of a need to be highly competent and to be seen as being so.

Kaplan coins a term: elevation. This term is meant to encompass all the descriptors used to describe an executive; e.g., power, success, expertise, competence. The gist of Kaplan's argument is that different executives are elevated to different degrees. A founder and long-time leader of a successful company would be highly elevated.

Kaplan also observes that executive demeanor can inhibit feedback. for example, executives who are elevated tend to monopolize conversations, and insiders who are able to speak frankly with the executive are likely to be cheerleaders for the executive. Subordinates can consciously or subconsciously suppress criticism of the executive as a survival technique.

Kaplan theory is fascinating but he does not offer empirical evidence to support his theory of elevation. However, I find a good deal of face

validity to it. His recommended interventions for CEOs who suffer from elevation includes offering them "self-assessment at a prestigious institution," preferably the Center for Creative Leadership, with which Kaplan was associated when he published this tome. He also suggests that executives prefer hearing about their strengths, rather than their weaknesses, and building on strengths of an executive may be an acceptable approach.

Synthesizing a Model

The synthesizing of the notions and theories of distance education with executive development suggests several problems. The following is a grid which identifies problems that may occur when incorporating the two disciplines of executive development and distance learning. The grid displays generalized notions of distance learning in higher education, and how those notions correspond with distance learning in executive development.

AREA	DISTANCE EDUCATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION	DISTANCE EDUCATION FOR EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT
1) Entrance to study	Students in this area are likely entering studies because they wish to pursue a college degree and for any number of reasons, do not attend a conventional school (such as proximity)	Students in this area are likely to enter because they are required by their employer or they feel they can obtain substantial reward (raise, advancement, etc.)

2) Selection of subject to study	Student is free to select field of study, though once having selected a discipline, may be required to follow an established curriculum	Student is prescribed which curriculum to follow by employer. Little choice exists once student enters program
3) Contact with institution of learning	Student will be in periodic contact with tutor in regard to asking questions, submitting assignments and receiving feedback. Contact will probably be by telephone and at most, once or twice per month. Weak identification with institution, if at all	Same as for higher education distance education.
4) Contact with fellow students	Probably infrequently, if at all. Essentially no cohort contact.	Same as for higher education distance education.
5) Motivation for completing studies	Completion of material means receipt of a degree, enabling learner to have better and more marketable job skills, enabling greater income. Enhanced credentials, prestige in community.	Offer of promotion or raise. More prestige in the office.
6) Disincentives for completing studies	Boredom, frustration, depression, not enough positive reinforcement from institution/tutors, lack of identification with institution, lack of knowledge of one's standing in institution, perception that receipt of degree will not change anything, regular interruptions, inadequate previous knowledge or study habits, cultural predisposition to perform poorly in study.	Same as for higher education distance learning with the addition of receiving raise or promotion without completing the curriculum, conflicting signals from boss over enrollment (boss doesn't want to lose good employee,) failure to relate studies to improvement of conditions at work, embarrassed not to already be an "expert."

The underlying premise in all this is that the problems encountered in distance education for executive development will be essentially the same as for higher education, except with the addition of a few more complications. For example, motives for entering study of executive development may not be as discernable as why one would want to enter higher education. Once enrolled, disincentives to continue study are increased. The end result is

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that completion of the study may be less predictable or even less controllable.

Proposal for Staff Development through Distance Education/Conclusion

As described at the beginning of this paper, Goodwill Industries of America, Inc. offers executive development via distance education. The process is a successful one, but other organizations contemplating executive staff development may want to consider the following, particularly if the organization has small control over the individuals in the training program:

Entrance to study. Chances are, aspirants entering executive training truly want to be executives, yet all probably have a high self-efficacy; i.e., a sense that they can already handle the job. Therefore, entering the development program, from their perception, is merely a pro forma transaction with the corporate office, and by their perception, will have only small bearing on whether they successfully compete for the job. In this aspect, Kaplan's theory of elevation is quite applicable. While most learners entering executive development at Goodwill Industries are not yet CEOs, clearly the elevation process has begun in many cases, as does the reluctance to accurately assess self-limitations. It is compounded if the

learner is offered a CEO position without completion of the curriculum, as happens on occasion.

One recommended way of avoiding this problem is to regularly schedule encounter meetings of the interns, either by telephone/teleconference or in regional meetings. The mandatory meetings would address the question of curriculum completion and feelings about being in executive development. Once again, Kaplan's notions of focus on strength, not weakness, has applicability here, as well.

Selection of subject to study. At Goodwill Industries, the Human Resources staff assigns the content of the module based on the results of the assessment center process and coinciding testing. The learner has no formal input into this process. The encounter meeting can also aid in addressing the need, or lack of need, for pursuing a particular seminar or module. This could even be expanded along the lines of a college or university, where the learner is assigned core courses, and then has an option to choose among several modules, seminars and courses to complete the requirements for certification. To encourage face-to-face meetings, certain seminars would be included in the core courses. It may also be more effective to move interns through the seminars together, as cohorts.

Contact with institution of learning/contact with fellow students. Evidence seems to clearly suggest that the higher the contact with the tutor, the higher the completion rate (Coldeway, 1980; Stone, 1992.) The tutors should be in contact with every learner no less than twice per month. Telephone contact would be acceptable. Further, regular contact with cohorts in the study program would also enhance the human contact for the learners, enhancing identification with the organization, as well as offering relief from some daily routines, etc. (as identified by Elgood.)

Motivation/disincentives for completion. Further development of cohort groups may aid in the completion rates of executive development learners. The ability to compare one's standing from the context of one's peers seems to be an important element.

This is where the "holistic" approach to executive development (as in the work by Mentkowski and DeAnda,) might have impact. If continued professional development can be indoctrinated as a standard of a successful executive, then completion rates can also be enhanced. Therefore, part of the mission of a regularly scheduled cohort meeting would be to address the need for continuing professional development as part of the complete executive, from which other competencies flow.

Future areas of research should include:

- Sources of motivation for completion in executive development training by distance. Do these differ radically from the research put forth by REDEAL? Some of their studies could be replicated in an industrial setting.

- Can the notion of addressing executive competencies in a "holistic" fashion be tested empirically? That is, if one attempts to develop a whole person first (sort of a personalized version of a framework in the advanced organizer theory,) is that more effective than just teaching competencies?

- How effective would the development of a regularly scheduled meeting of a cohort group be in affecting positively the completion of distance executive development material?

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